



#2

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STAR WARS

DARK EMPIRE



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BOOK 2: DEVASTATOR OF WORLDS

In a time of increasing chaos in the Galaxy, divided Imperial forces contend ferociously for control of the Empire.

The Rebel Alliance is quick to take advantage of the upheaval, spreading the cry of rebellion far and wide — and inflicting stinging blows against the feuding Imperials.

At the height of the growing anarchy, a captured Star Destroyer piloted by Luke Skywalker, Lando Calrissian and Wedge Antilles is shot down over the Imperial City.

In an attempt to rescue their fallen comrades, Princess Leia and Han Solo, together with the Wookiee Chewbacca and protocol droid C-3PO, fly the Millennium Falcon into the heart of the conflagration.

But Skywalker, now a Jedi of the highest order, refuses to be saved. Instead he chooses to face a mysterious energy storm that sweeps him, along with R2-D2, toward certain destruction.

Meanwhile, at a secret rebel base, Alliance leader Mon Mothma receives disturbing information: a Dark Side power has emerged from hiding, reunifying the feuding Imperials and gathering the technological might of the Empire for a major assault on the worlds of the Rebellion.

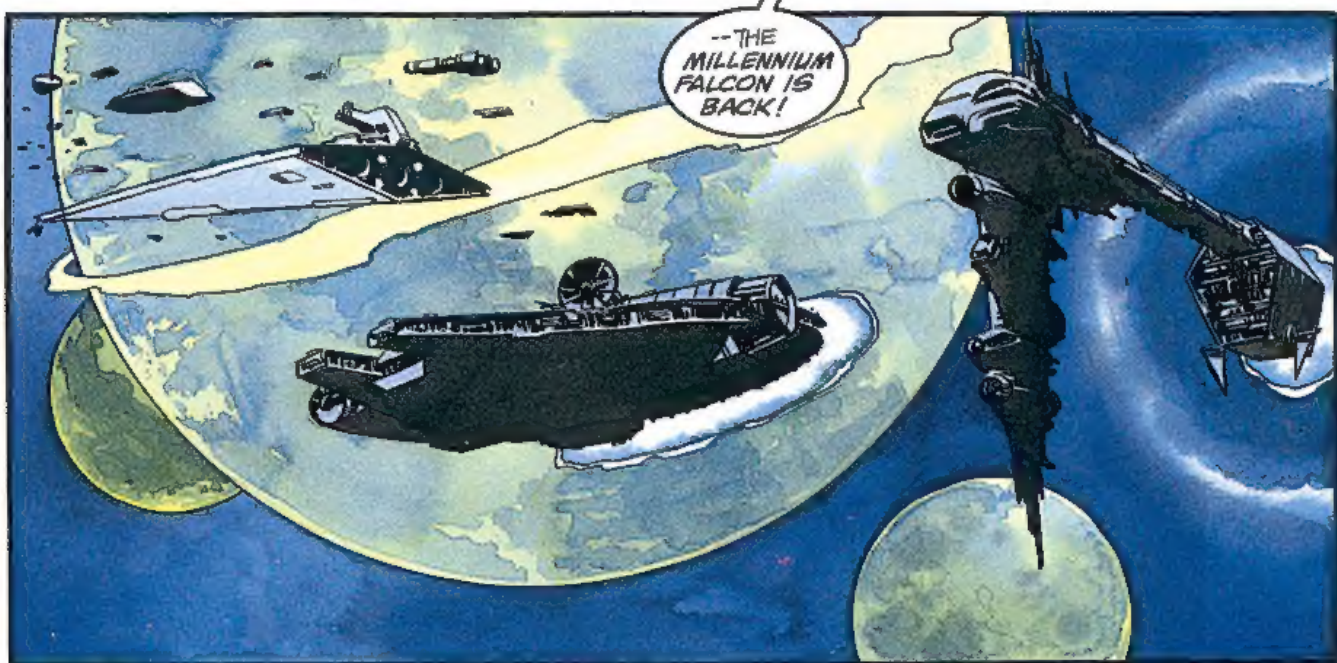
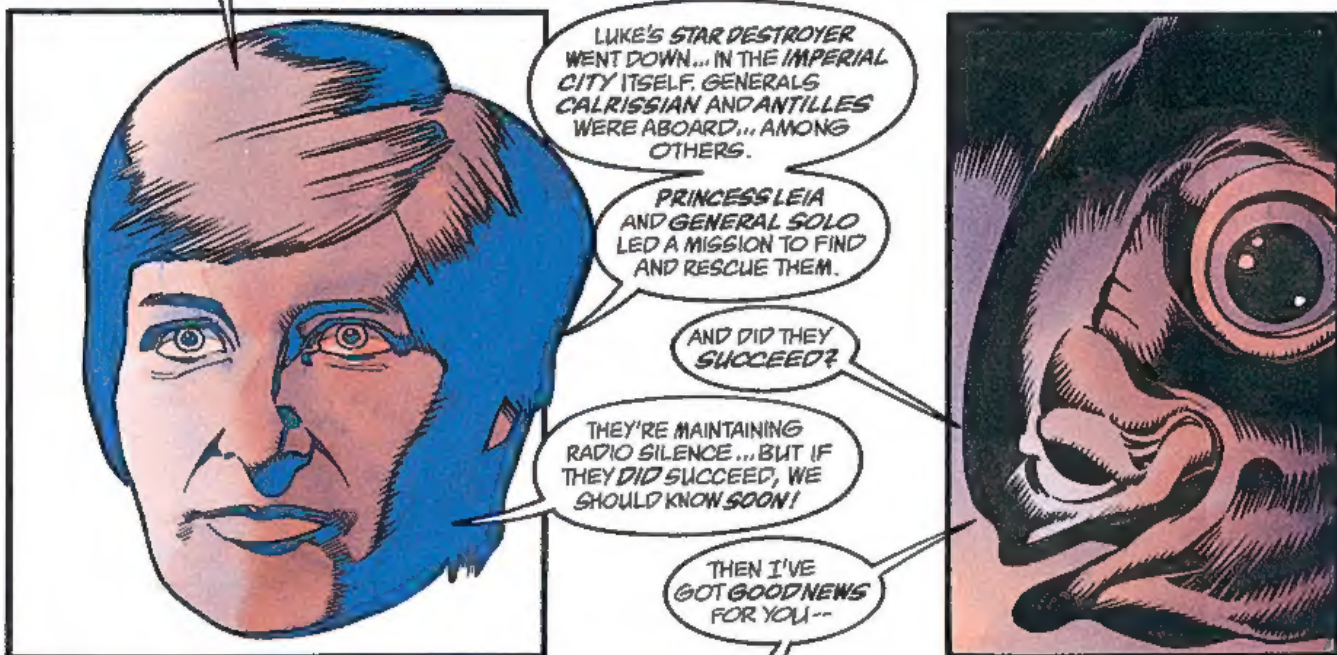
THE FIFTH MOON OF DA SOOCHA, AN UNCHARTED WORLD IN THE CYAX SYSTEM... WHERE A CAPTURED STAR DESTROYER, RENAMED EMANCIPATOR, ORBITS WITH THE FLEET OF THE REBEL ALLIANCE.

ADMIRAL ACKBAR, ABOARD THE CALAMARI FLAGSHIP *DEFIANCE*, HAS JUST RETURNED FROM A RECONNAISSANCE MISSION TO THE INNERMOST QUADRANT OF THE GALAXY...

ALLIANCE LEADER MON MOTHMA, COMMUNICATING FROM THE MASSIVE REBEL STRONGHOLD ON THE MOON BELOW, HEARS ACKBAR'S REPORT...

SOMETHING VERY BIG IS HAPPENING, MON MOTHMA... WE SAW IMPERIAL SHIPS FROM BOTH SIDES OF THE CIVIL WAR VANISHING INTO THE UNINHABITED REGIONS OF THE GALACTIC CORE!

OUR SPIES AND PROBE DROIDS REPORT SIMILAR SIGHTINGS.



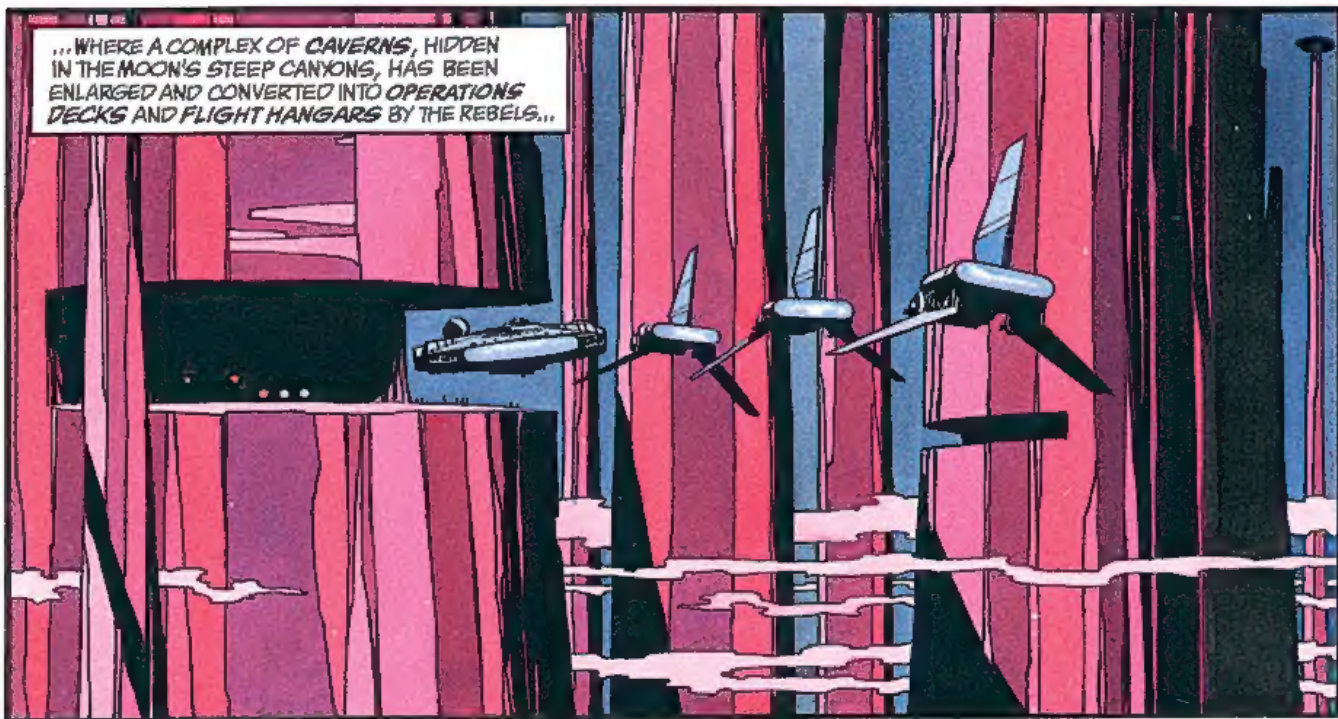
ACKBAR AND THE OTHER
COMMANDERS OF THE
ORBITING REBEL FLEET
BOARD SHUTTLECRAFT
AND FOLLOW THE FALCON
AS IT DESCENDS TOWARD
THE STRONGHOLD BELOW--

SOLO TO
PINNACLE BASE--I'VE
GOT SURVIVORS OF THE
STAR DESTROYER
LIBERATOR...

...OPEN
HANGAR ONE--
WE'RE COMING
IN!

GUIDED BY CURIOUS CREATURES
CALLED IXLLS, THE SHIPS RACE
DOWN AMONG THE TREACHEROUS
ROCK FORMATIONS OF THE FIFTH
MOON...

...WHERE A COMPLEX OF CAVERNS, HIDDEN IN THE MOON'S STEEP CANYONS, HAS BEEN ENLARGED AND CONVERTED INTO OPERATIONS DECKS AND FLIGHT HANGARS BY THE REBELS...



PINNACLE BASE-- THERE MON MOTHMA AND THE AGING GENERALS MADINE AND DODONNA MEET THE CREW OF THE FALCON--

PRINCESS LEIA! THANK GOODNESS YOU'RE BACK... BUT WHERE'S COMMANDER SKYWALKER?

A TERRIBLE THING HAPPENED... THE DARK SIDE HAS TAKEN LUKE PRISONER-- HE LET IT HAPPEN!

AND POOR ARTOO-DETOO IS WITH HIM! THEY'LL MAKE HYDRO-SPANNERS OUT OF HIM... IF HE SURVIVES!



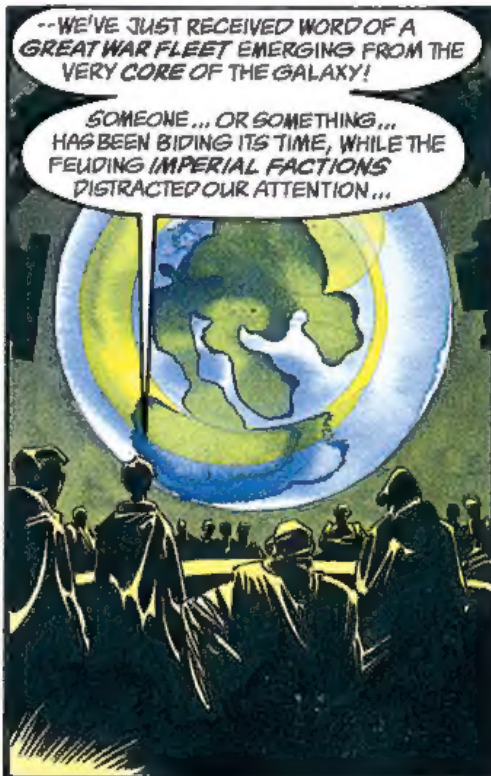
MON MOTHMA CALLS AN EMERGENCY MEETING OF THE ALLIANCE COMMAND STAFF--



THE ENERGY STORM THAT TOOK COMMANDER SKYWALKER-- THIS IS NOT AN ISOLATED EVENT--

--WE'VE JUST RECEIVED WORD OF A GREAT WAR FLEET EMERGING FROM THE VERY CORE OF THE GALAXY!

SOMEONE... OR SOMETHING... HAS BEEN BIDDING ITS TIME, WHILE THE FEUDING IMPERIAL FACTIONS DISTRACTED OUR ATTENTION...



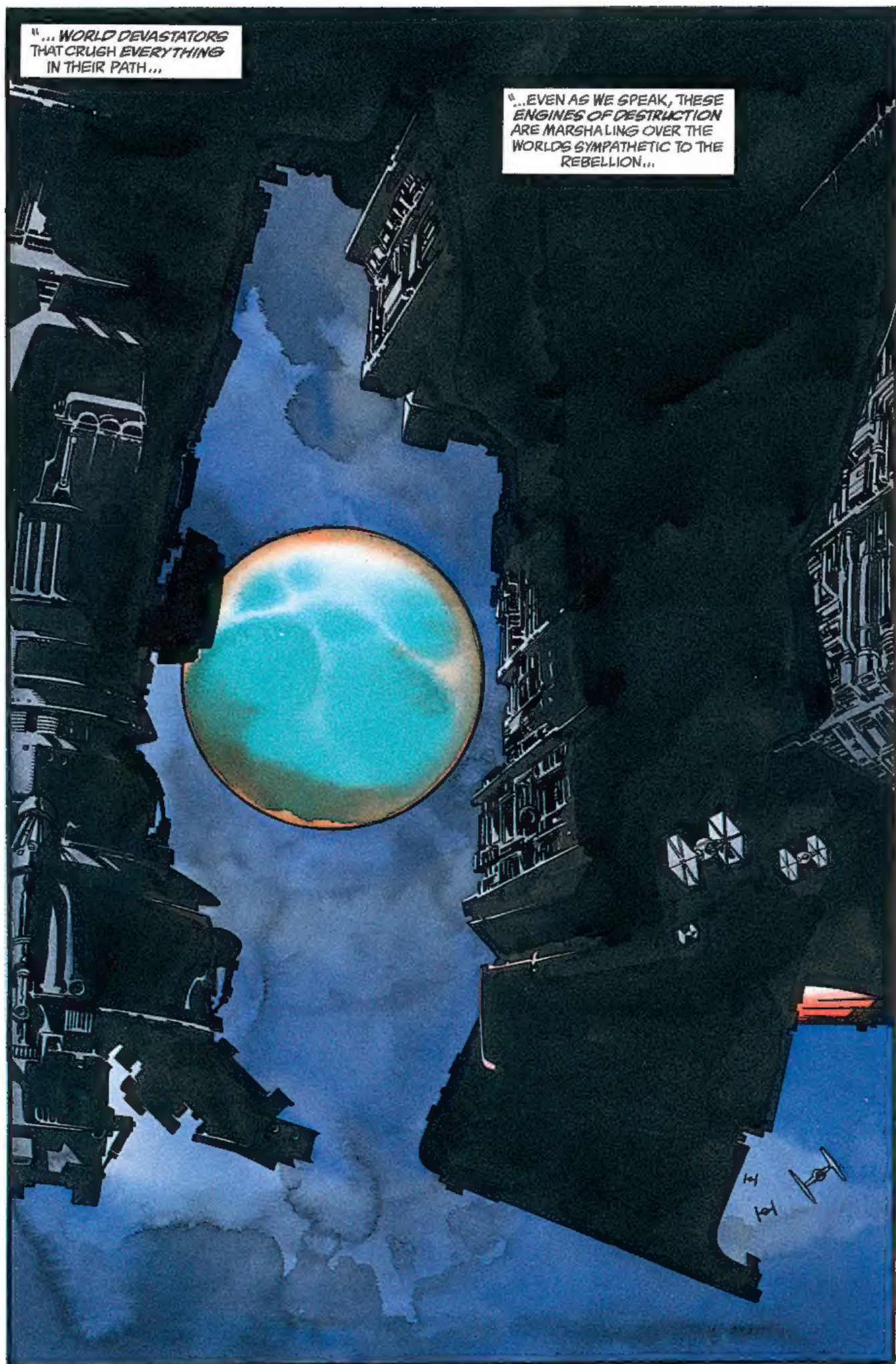
WE HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE A DARK SIDE GENIUS IS AT WORK... CREATING NEW TECHNOLOGIES THAT GO BEYOND ALL PREVIOUS CONCEPTION...



OUR SCOUT DROIDS REPORT THE APPEARANCE OF DIABOLICAL MACHINES...

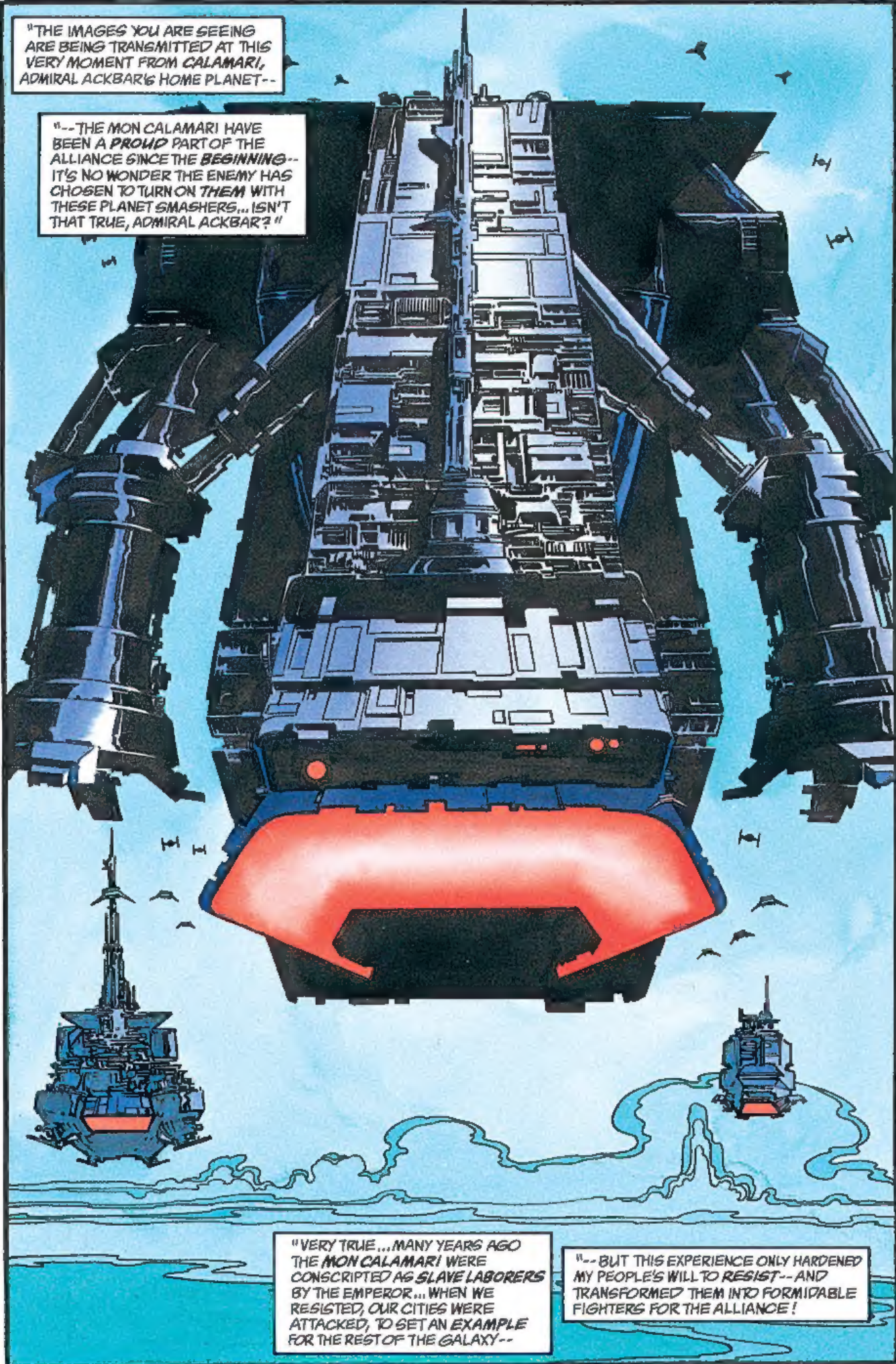
"...WORLD DEVASTATORS
THAT CRUSH EVERYTHING
IN THEIR PATH..."

"...EVEN AS WE SPEAK, THESE
ENGINES OF DESTRUCTION
ARE MARSHALING OVER THE
WORLD'S SYMPATHETIC TO THE
REBELLION..."



"THE IMAGES YOU ARE SEEING
ARE BEING TRANSMITTED AT THIS
VERY MOMENT FROM CALAMARI,
ADMIRAL ACKBAR'S HOME PLANET--

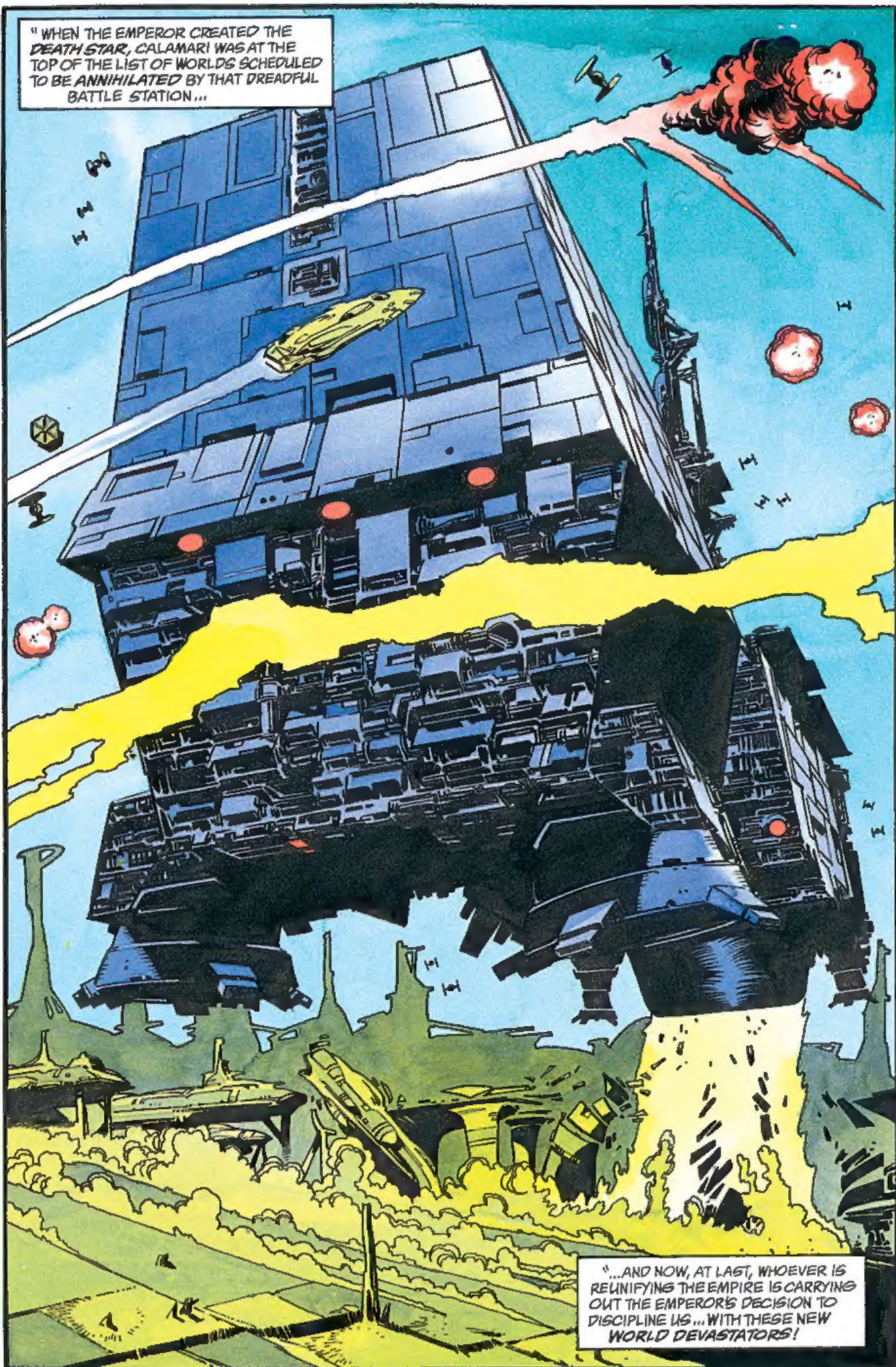
"--THE MON CALAMARI HAVE
BEEN A **PROUD** PART OF THE
ALLIANCE SINCE THE **BEGINNING**--
IT'S NO WONDER THE ENEMY HAS
CHOSEN TO TURN ON **THEM** WITH
THESE PLANET SMASHERS... ISN'T
THAT TRUE, ADMIRAL ACKBAR?"



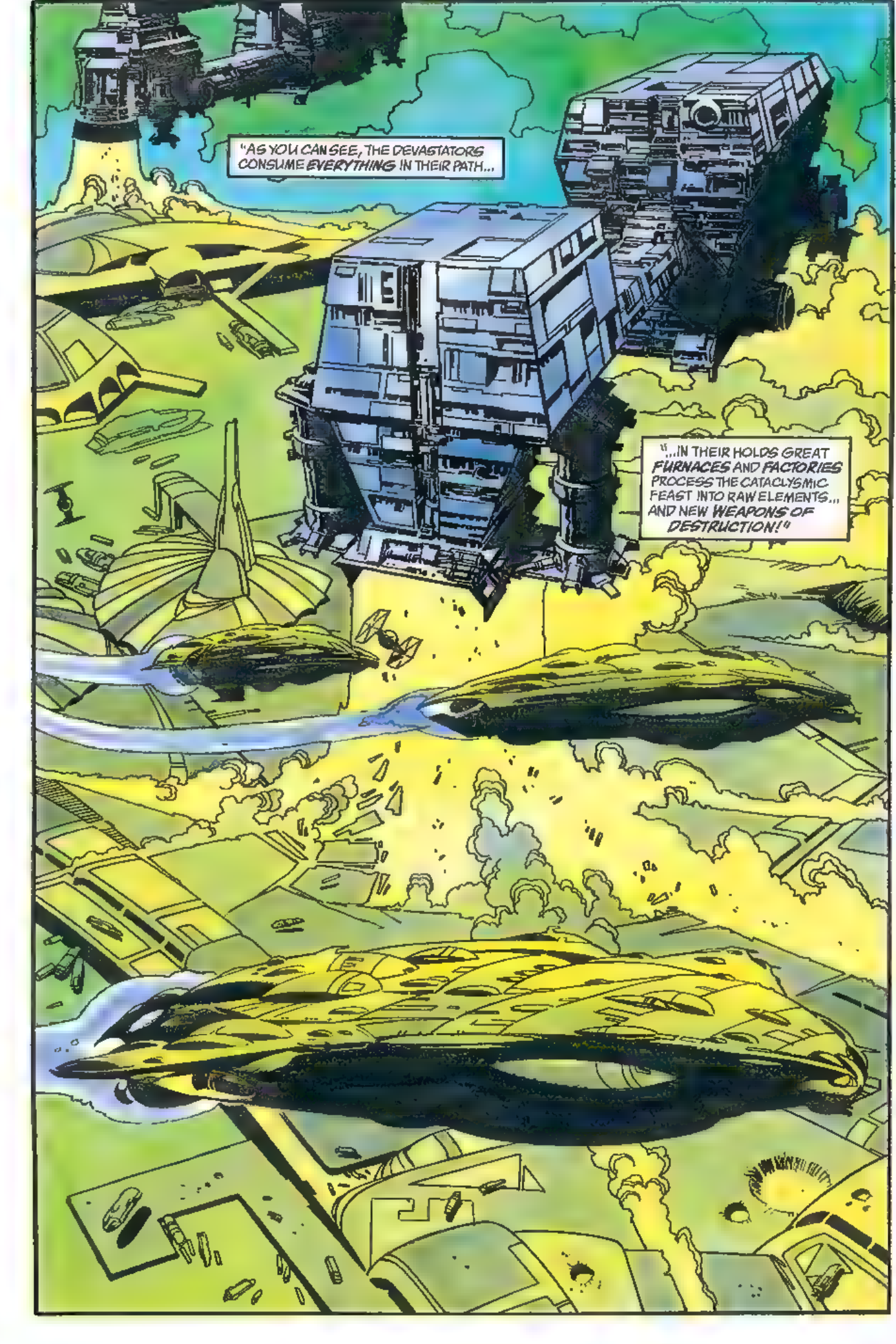
"VERY TRUE... MANY YEARS AGO
THE **MON CALAMARI** WERE
CONSCRIPTED AS **SLAVE LABORERS**
BY THE EMPEROR... WHEN WE
RESISTED, OUR CITIES WERE
ATTACKED, TO SET AN EXAMPLE
FOR THE REST OF THE GALAXY--

"-- BUT THIS EXPERIENCE ONLY HARDENED
MY PEOPLE'S WILL TO **RESIST**-- AND
TRANSFORMED THEM INTO FORMIDABLE
FIGHTERS FOR THE ALLIANCE!

"WHEN THE EMPEROR CREATED THE DEATH STAR, CALAMARI WAS AT THE TOP OF THE LIST OF WORLDS SCHEDULED TO BE ANNIHILATED BY THAT DREADFUL BATTLE STATION..."



"...AND NOW, AT LAST, WHOEVER IS REUNIFYING THE EMPIRE IS CARRYING OUT THE EMPEROR'S DECISION TO DISCIPLINE US... WITH THESE NEW WORLD DEVASTATORS!"

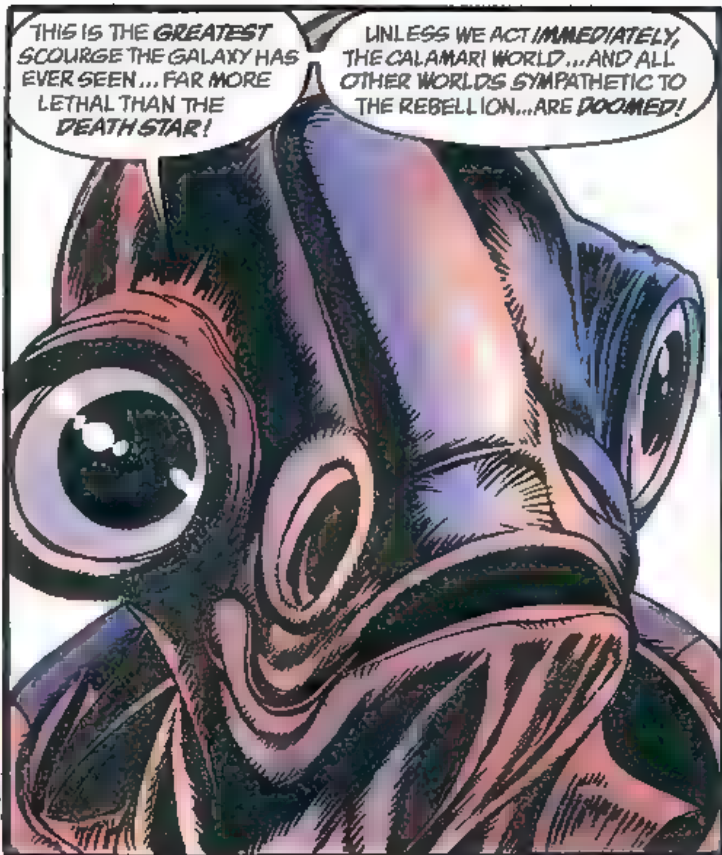


"AS YOU CAN SEE, THE DEVASTATORS
CONSUME **EVERYTHING** IN THEIR PATH..."

"...IN THEIR HOLDS GREAT
FURNACES AND FACTORIES
PROCESS THE CATAclySMIC
FEAST INTO RAW ELEMENTS...
AND NEW **WEAPONS OF
DESTRUCTION!**"

THIS IS THE **GREATEST** SCOURGE THE GALAXY HAS EVER SEEN... FAR MORE LETHAL THAN THE **DEATH STAR!**

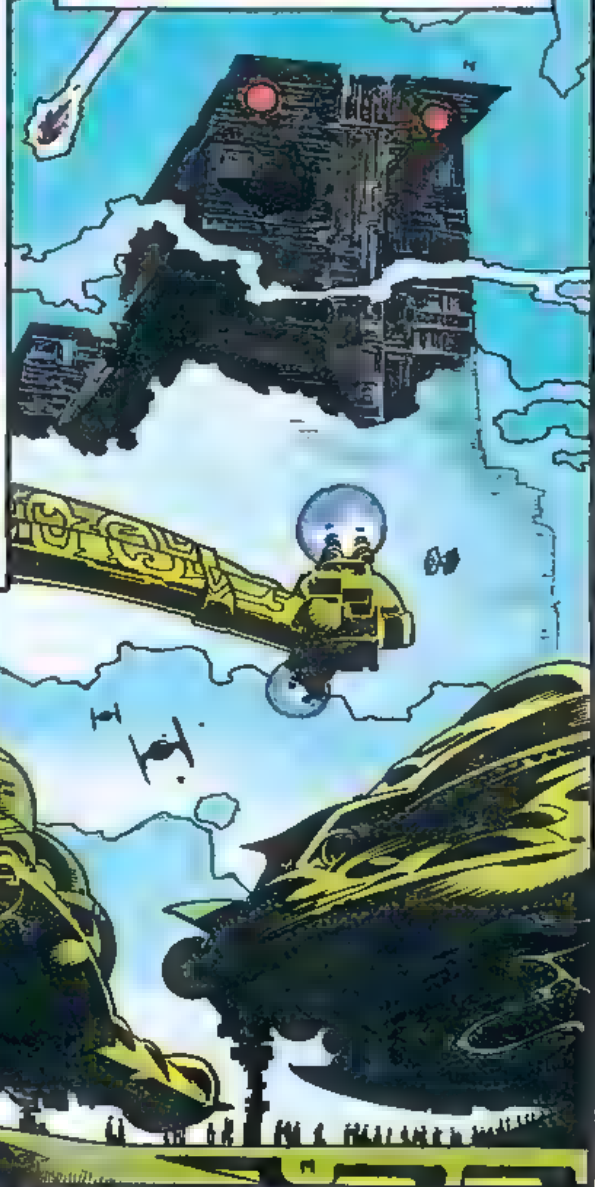
UNLESS WE ACT **IMMEDIATELY**, THE CALAMARI WORLD... AND ALL OTHER WORLDS SYMPATHETIC TO THE REBELLION... ARE **DOOMED!**



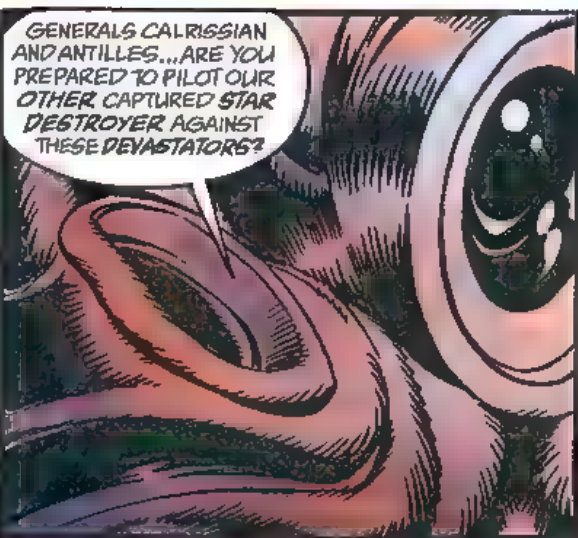
"THE PINNACLE MOON WE'RE ON ORBITS A HABITABLE WATER WORLD-- **DA SOOCHA.**"

"WE MUST DO EVERYTHING WE CAN TO HELP MY PEOPLE REACH THIS PLACE OF SANCTUARY!"

"**GREEN AND BLUE SQUADRONS** WILL LEAVE AT ONCE TO ESCORT AND DEFEND THE EVACUATION OF CALAMARI..."

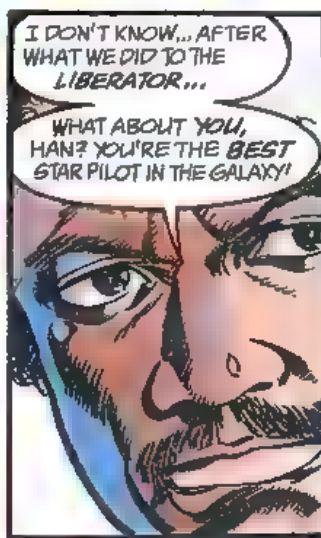


GENERALS CALRISSIAN AND ANTILLES... ARE YOU PREPARED TO PILOT OUR OTHER CAPTURED STAR DESTROYER AGAINST THESE DEVASTATORS?



I DON'T KNOW... AFTER WHAT WE DID TO THE **LIBERATOR...**

WHAT ABOUT YOU, HAN? YOU'RE THE **BEST** STAR PILOT IN THE GALAXY!



YOU AND WEDGE'LL HAVE TO WIN IT, LANDO. I'VE GOT MY HANDS **FULL** BRIEFING ALL THE NEW FIGHTER TEAMS THAT ARE COMING OVER TO THE ALLIANCE!



THE COUNCIL BREAKS UP...
AND HAN GOES TO HIS
WIFE, WHO WAS STRANGELY
QUIET THROUGHOUT THE
MEETING.

THIS ENDLESS WAR... IT SEEMS LIKE WE'VE
ONLY BEEN ALONE FOR FIVE MINUTES SINCE
MON MOTHMA MARRIED US...

I REALLY WANTED TO GO WITH LANDO...
BUT I ACCEPTED THIS OTHER ASSIGNMENT
SO WE'D HAVE A CHANCE TO BE
TOGETHER.

HAN...
SOMETHING AWFUL
IS HAPPENING TO
LUKE...

HE'S STILL
ALIVE... I CAN
FEEL IT--

--BUT HE'S
GETTING FARTHER
AND FARTHER
AWAY...

WE MUST
HELP HIM...

WE NEED SOME
TIME TO OURSELVES,
LEIA. LUKE DOESN'T
WANT ANY HELP HE
SAYS HE HAS TO DO
IT ALONE, AND I
BELIEVE HIM...

HAN...

--BESIDES, YOU
KNOW ME... I'M NOT
ABOUT TO CHALLENGE
THE JUDGMENT OF
A JEDI!

WUAWNHN!

AND WHAT OF LUKE
SKYWALKER, JEDI
KNIGHT--?

THE ENERGY STORM
FUNNELED US INTO SOME
KIND OF **HYPERSPACE**
VEHICLE, ARTOO...

AT LEAST
WE'RE STILL
ALIVE!

BDEEK?

YEAH, TOO
BAD WE CAN'T
SEE OUT...

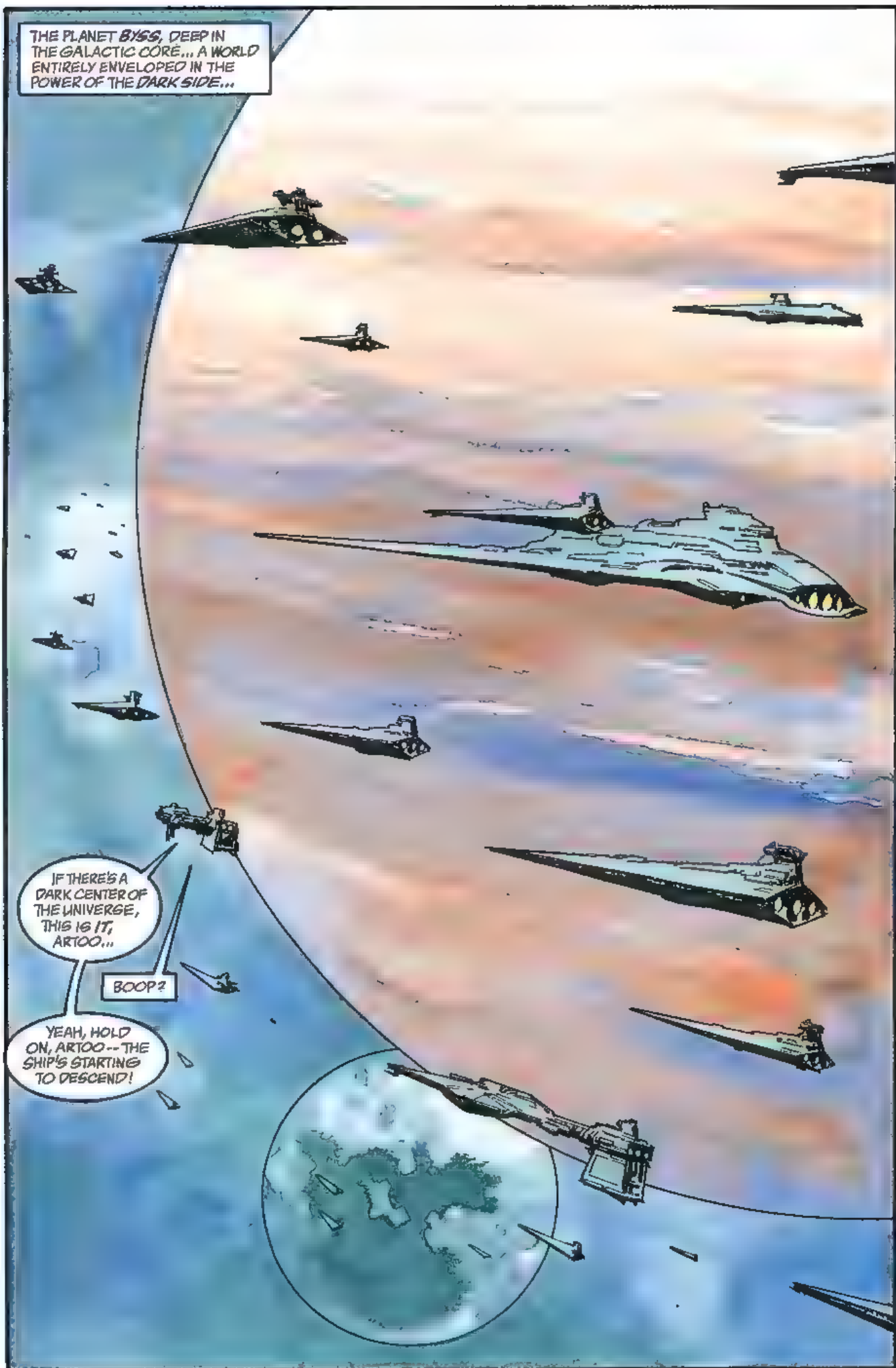
BUT TO THE EYES
OF THE **FORCE**, THESE
MANDALORIAN WALLS
DON'T EVEN EXIST!



WE'RE IN AN **IMPERIAL**
DUNGEON SHIP... THE KIND
THEY USED TO TRANSPORT
JEDI KNIGHTS DURING
THE CLONE WARS...

...AND IT LOOKS
LIKE WE'VE REACHED
OUR DESTINATION!

THE PLANET *BYSS*, DEEP IN
THE GALACTIC CORE... A WORLD
ENTIRELY ENVELOPED IN THE
POWER OF THE DARK SIDE...



IF THERE'S A
DARK CENTER OF
THE UNIVERSE,
THIS IS IT,
ARTOO...

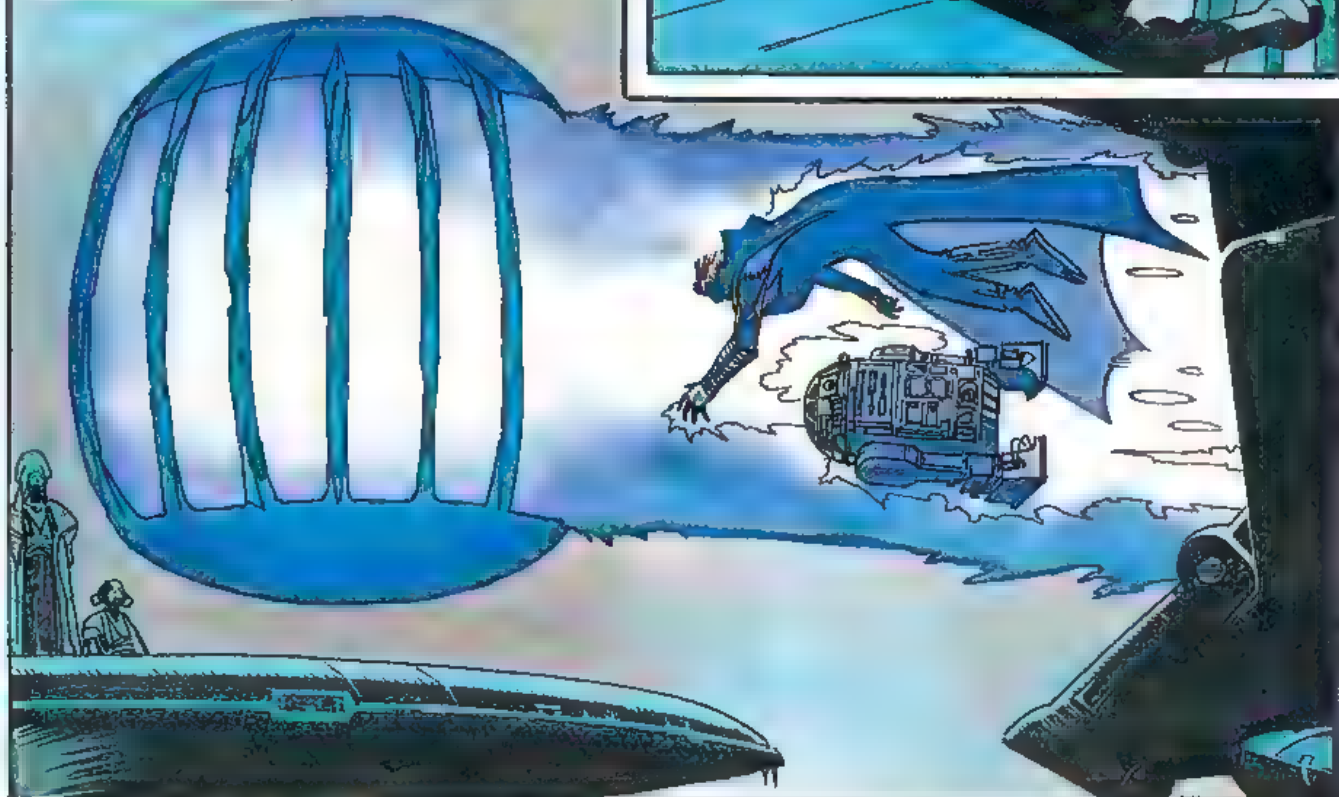
BOOP?

YEAH, HOLD
ON, ARTOO--THE
SHIP'S STARTING
TO DESCEND!

A TURBULENT FALL THROUGH THE PLANET'S
ATMOSPHERE, AND THE DUNGEON SHIP DOCKS
ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF A LUMINOUS CITY...

WE ARE
READY TO RECEIVE
THE PRISONER!

AN ENERGIZED CAGE IS WAITING--A TRAP
TO HOLD A JEDI!

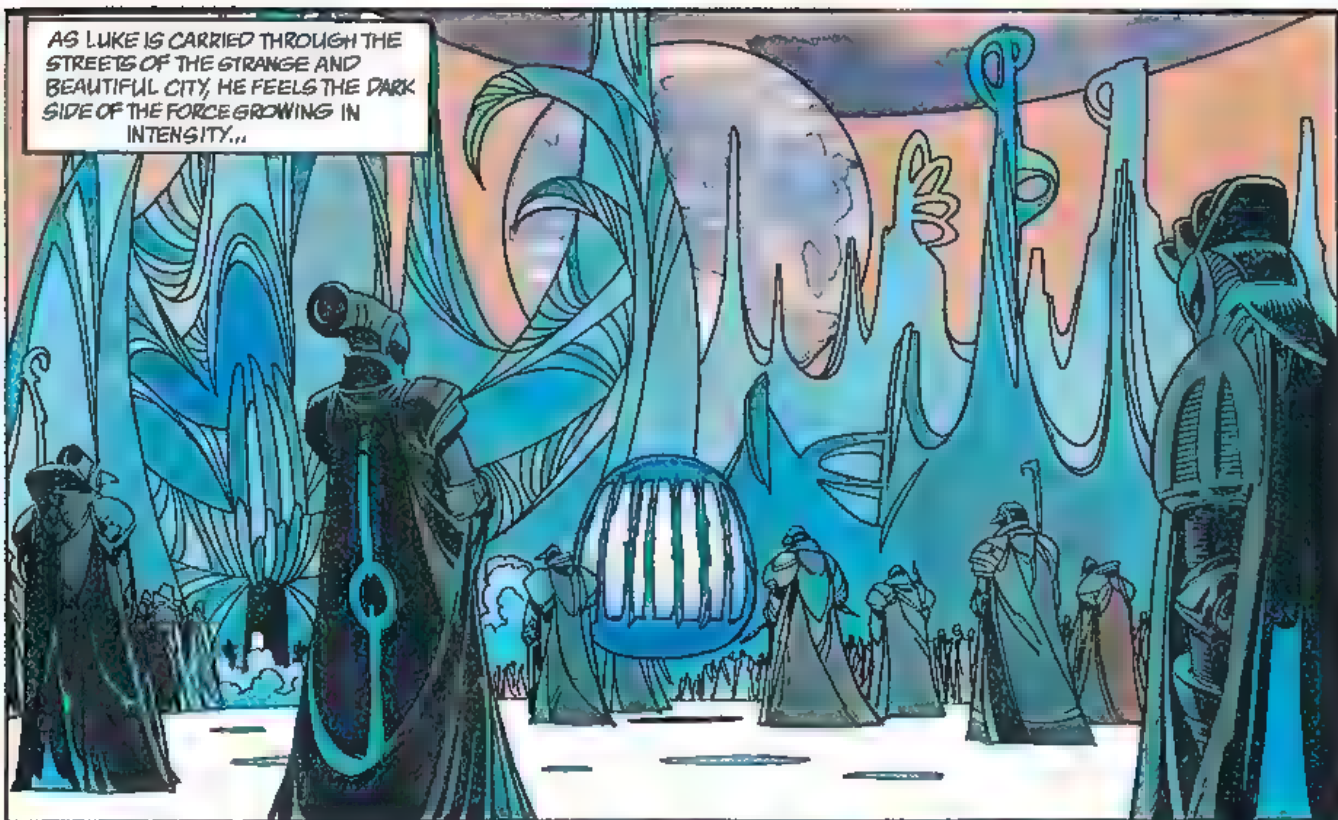


ARE YOU
SATISFIED? WE'VE
BROUGHT HIM TO
YOU ALIVE.

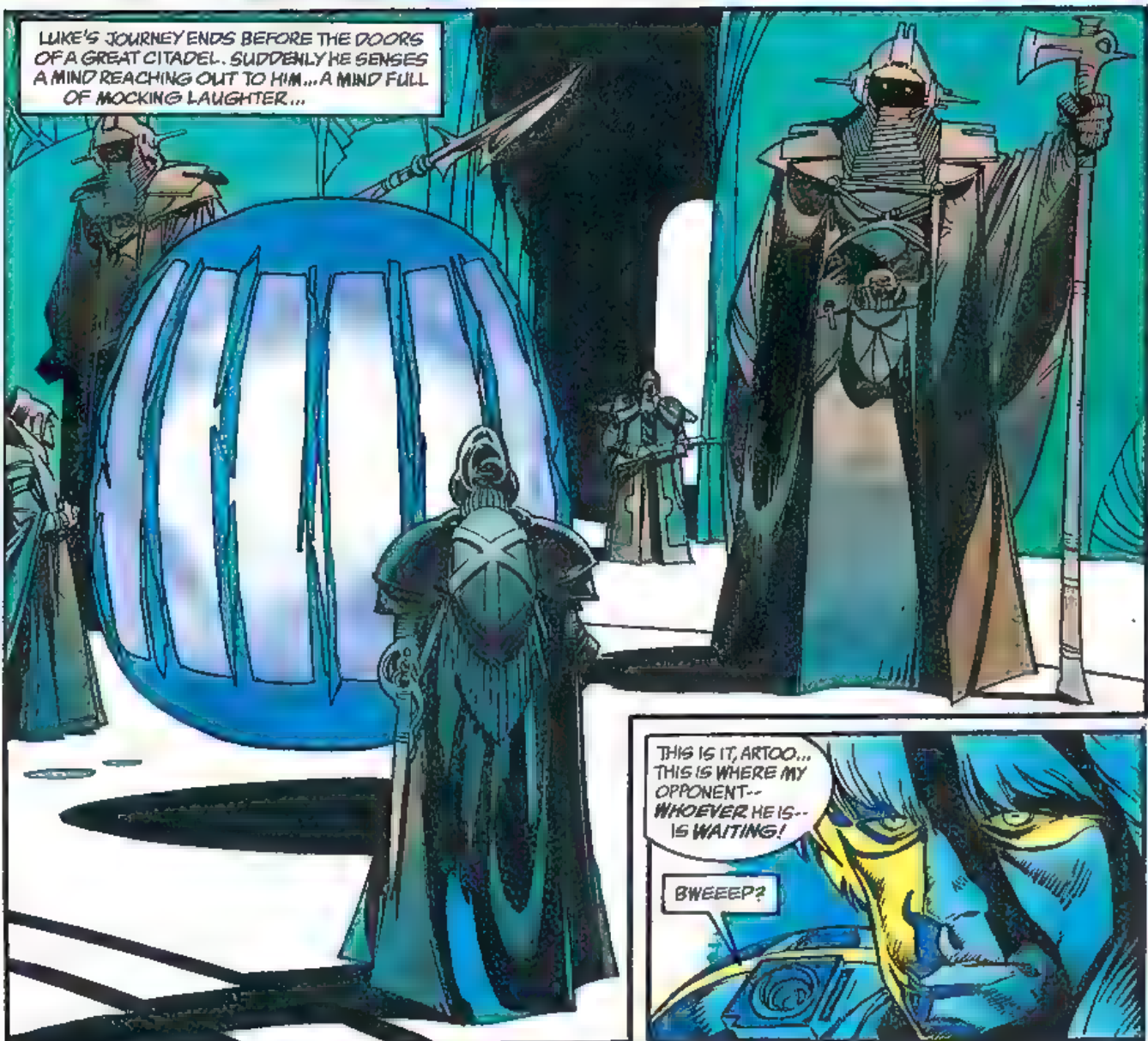
EXCELLENT. HAVE YOUR
MEN ESCORT THIS ONE TO
THE GREAT HALL.



AS LUKE IS CARRIED THROUGH THE
STREETS OF THE STRANGE AND
BEAUTIFUL CITY, HE FEELS THE DARK
SIDE OF THE FORCE GROWING IN
INTENSITY...

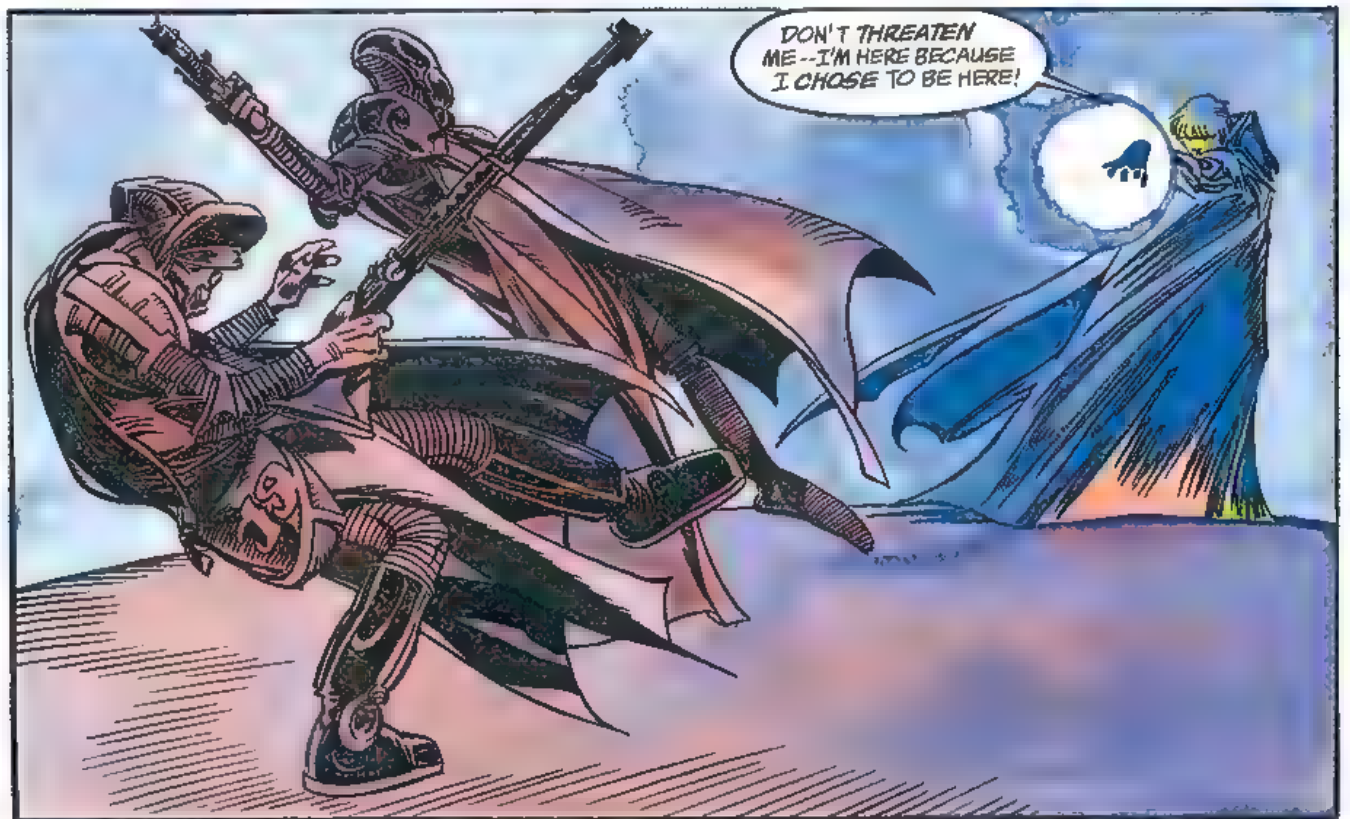


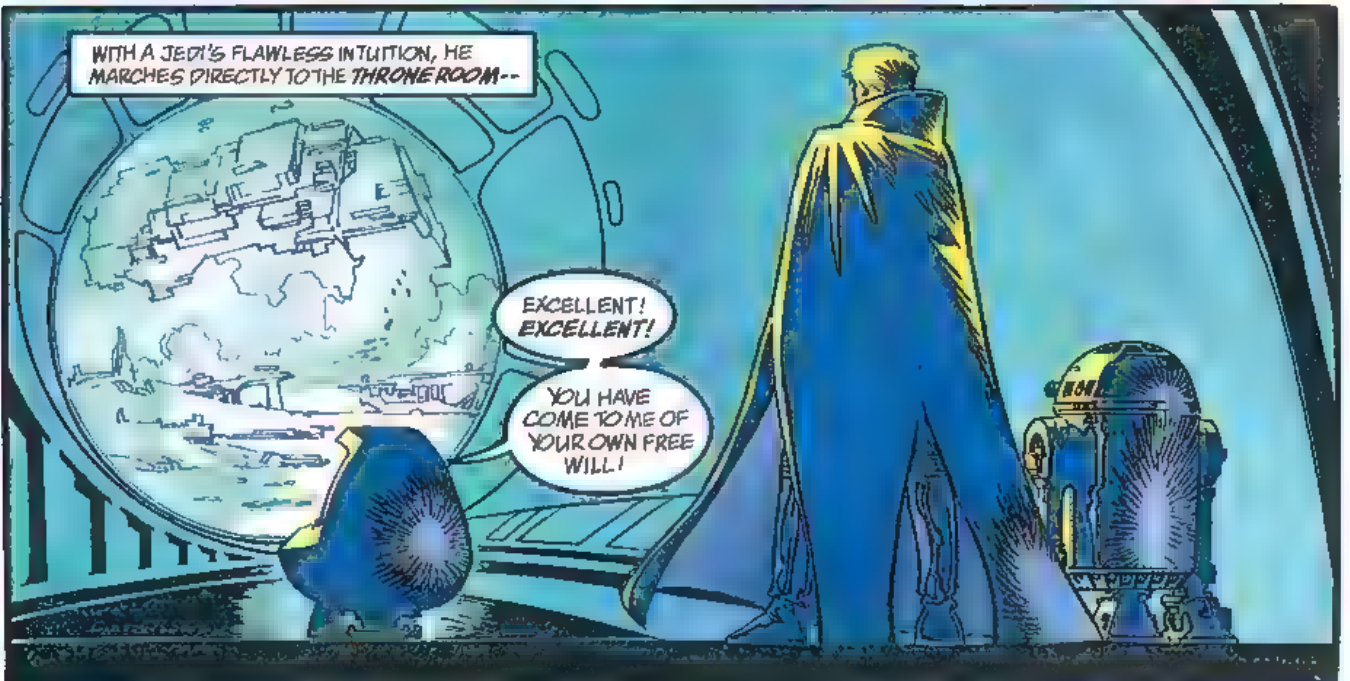
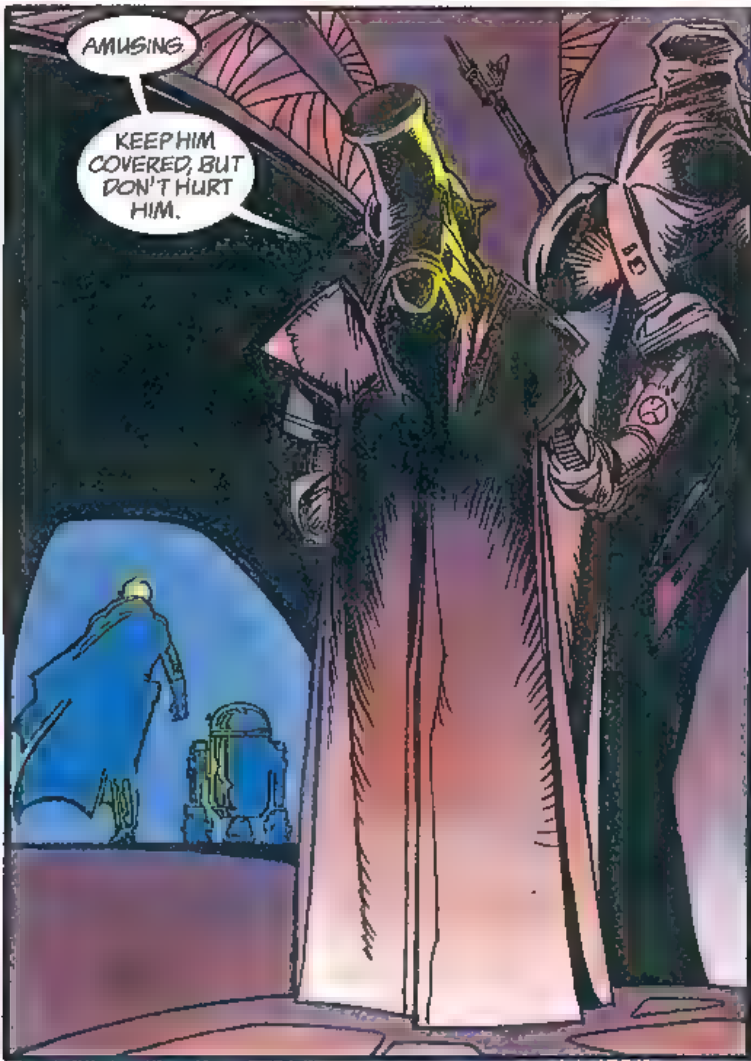
LUKE'S JOURNEY ENDS BEFORE THE DOORS
OF A GREAT CITADEL. SUDDENLY HE SENSES
A MIND REACHING OUT TO HIM... A MIND FULL
OF MOCKING LAUGHTER...



THIS IS IT, ARTOO...
THIS IS WHERE MY
OPPONENT--
WHOEVER HE IS--
IS WAITING!

BWEEEP?







YOU!
SOMEHOW,
I KNEW... BUT I
SAW YOU DIE!



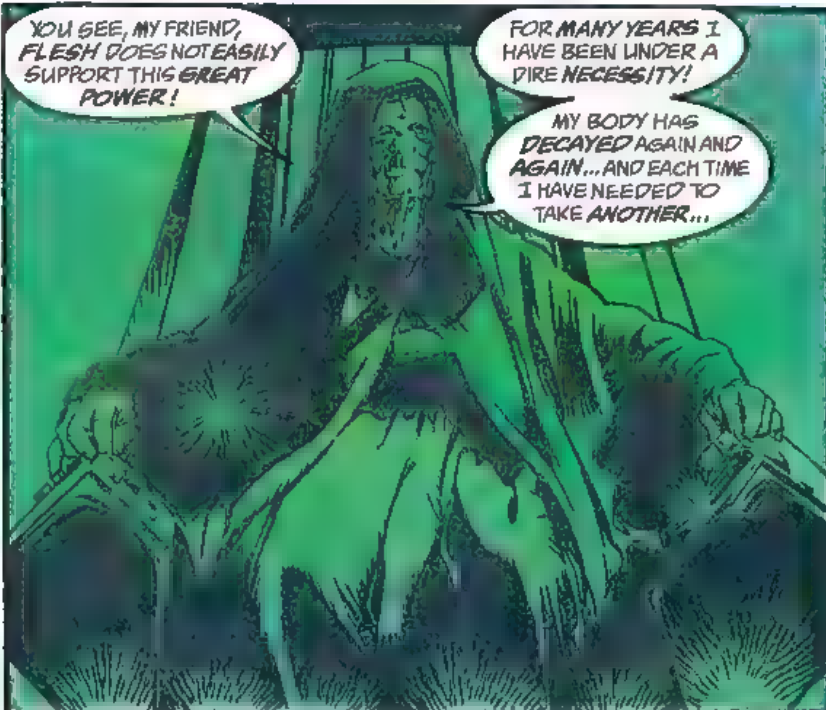
YES, YOU KNEW,
DIDN'T YOU... YOU'VE
GROWN VERY STRONG
IN THE FORCE SINCE
LAST WE MET...

BUT THEN,
SO HAVE I!



IT WAS NOT THE FIRST
TIME I DIED... NOR WILL IT
BE THE LAST!

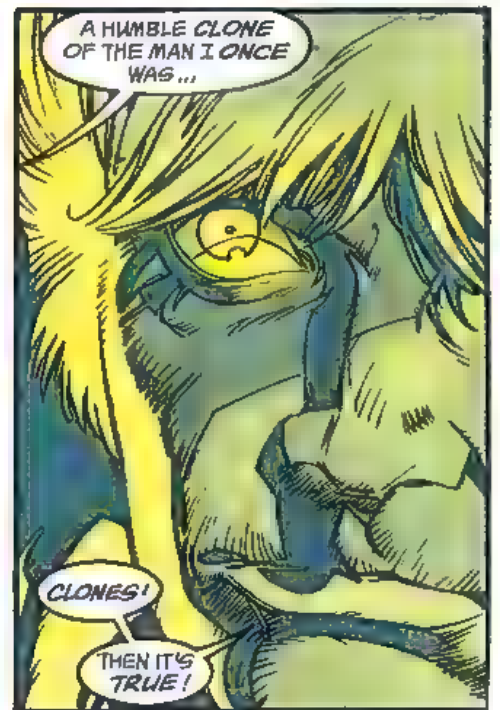
SUCH ARE THE MYSTERIES
OF THE DARK SIDE OF
THE FORCE!



YOU SEE, MY FRIEND,
FLESH DOES NOT EASILY
SUPPORT THIS GREAT
POWER!

FOR MANY YEARS I
HAVE BEEN UNDER A
DIRE NECESSITY!

MY BODY HAS
DECAYED AGAIN AND
AGAIN... AND EACH TIME
I HAVE NEEDED TO
TAKE ANOTHER...



A HUMBLE CLONE
OF THE MAN I ONCE
WAS...

CLONES!

THEN IT'S
TRUE!



YES, YOUNG SKYWALKER.

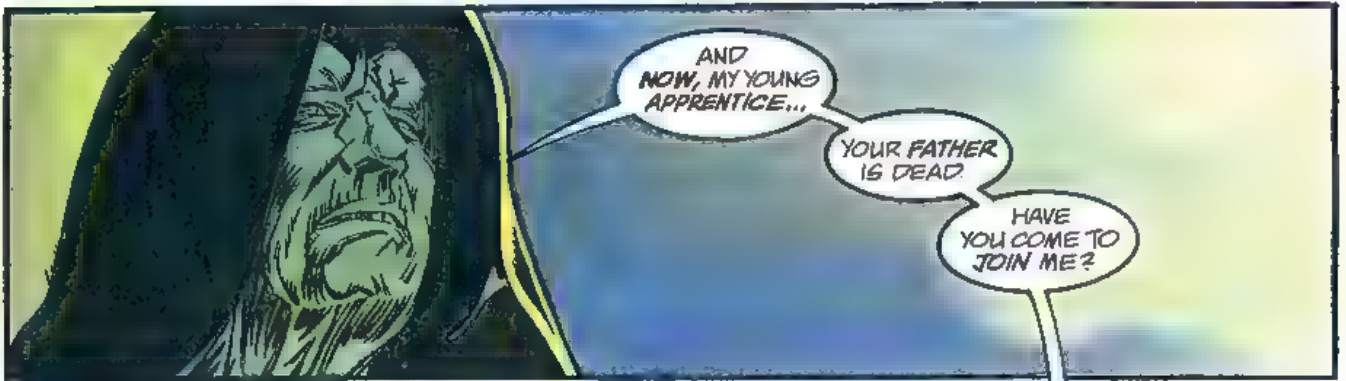
THE DYING IS PAINFUL...THE TRANSITION IS **NOT** AN ENJOYABLE EXPERIENCE.

BUT THE SUFFERING IS A SMALL PRICE TO PAY... FOR ETERNAL LIFE!



AFTER ALL...I LIVE PRIMARILY AS ENERGY... FORMLESSNESS...

...AND POWER!



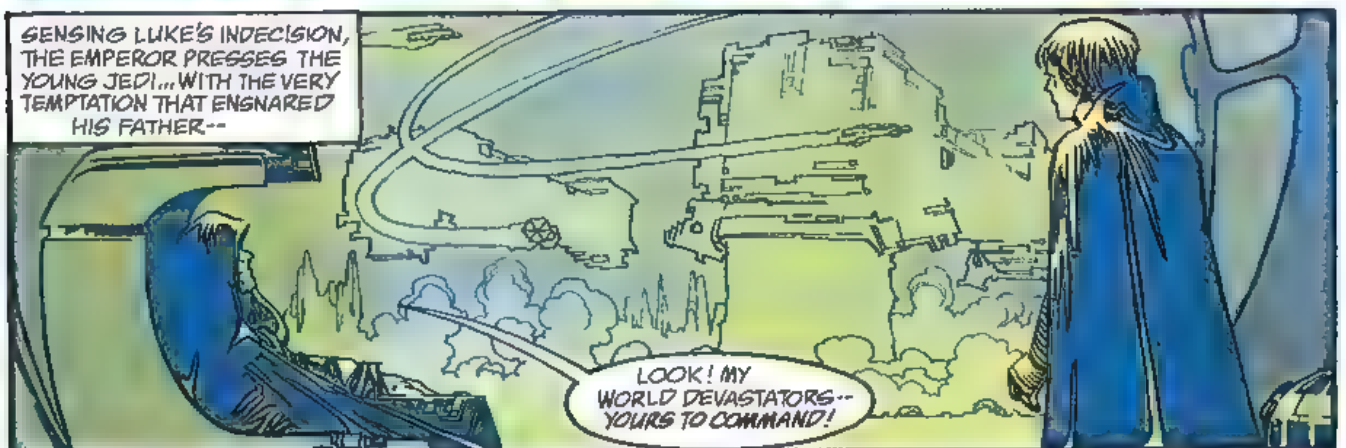
AND NOW, MY YOUNG APPRENTICE...

YOUR FATHER IS DEAD

HAVE YOU COME TO JOIN ME?



WILL YOU TAKE THE PLACE THAT RIGHTFULLY BELONGS TO YOU... AT MY SIDE?



SENSING LUKE'S INDECISION, THE EMPEROR PRESSES THE YOUNG JEDI...WITH THE VERY TEMPTATION THAT ENSNARED HIS FATHER--

LOOK! MY WORLD DEVASTATORS-- YOURS TO COMMAND!



...BUT CAN HE USE THE FORCE TO DEFEND THE FREEDOM OF BILLIONS...BY SLAYING THE OLD MAN?

IS IT SO DIFFICULT TO DECIDE, MY SON?

SURELY YOU KNOW THAT IF YOU STRIKE ME DOWN IN ANGER, I WILL LIVE AGAIN!

...PERHAPS I WILL EVEN LIVE AS YOU!



THE EMPEROR IS A MASTER STRATEGIST... HE HAS FORESEEN THIS MOMENT... NOW, UNEXPECTEDLY, HE OFFERS LUKE THE ONLY-- THE INEVITABLE-- SOLUTION TO HIS DILEMMA.



I SEE YOU HAVE GROWN WISE IN THE WAYS OF THE FORCE... YOU HAVE ACHIEVED CONTROL.

YOU ARE NO LONGER THE IMPULSIVE YOUTH, AT WAR WITH YOUR OWN ANGER...



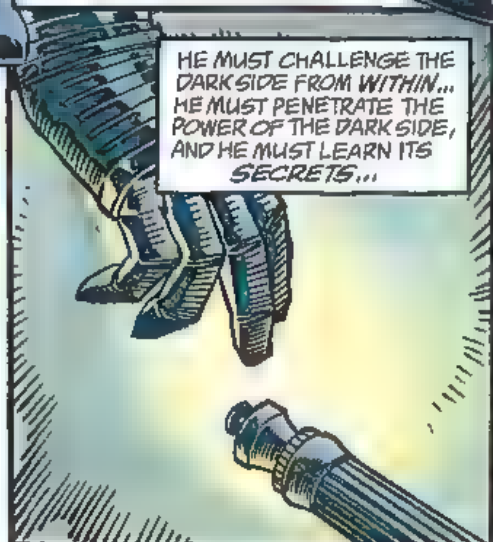
BUT YOU CAN STILL CONQUER ME...BY LEARNING THE SECRETS OF THE DARK SIDE WE BOTH KNOW THERE IS NO OTHER WAY FOR YOU.

THE EMPEROR'S WORDS BLAZE LIKE LIGHTNING ACROSS LUKE'S MIND...THE DARK SIDE HAS SPOKEN...AND FOR ONCE IT SPEAKS TRUTH.

A MOMENT OF GREATEST PERIL HAS ARRIVED...BUT IT IS THE MOMENT FOR WHICH LUKE WAS BORN...



HE MUST CHALLENGE THE DARK SIDE FROM WITHIN... HE MUST PENETRATE THE POWER OF THE DARK SIDE, AND HE MUST LEARN ITS SECRETS...



THERE IS NO OTHER WAY.

YES.

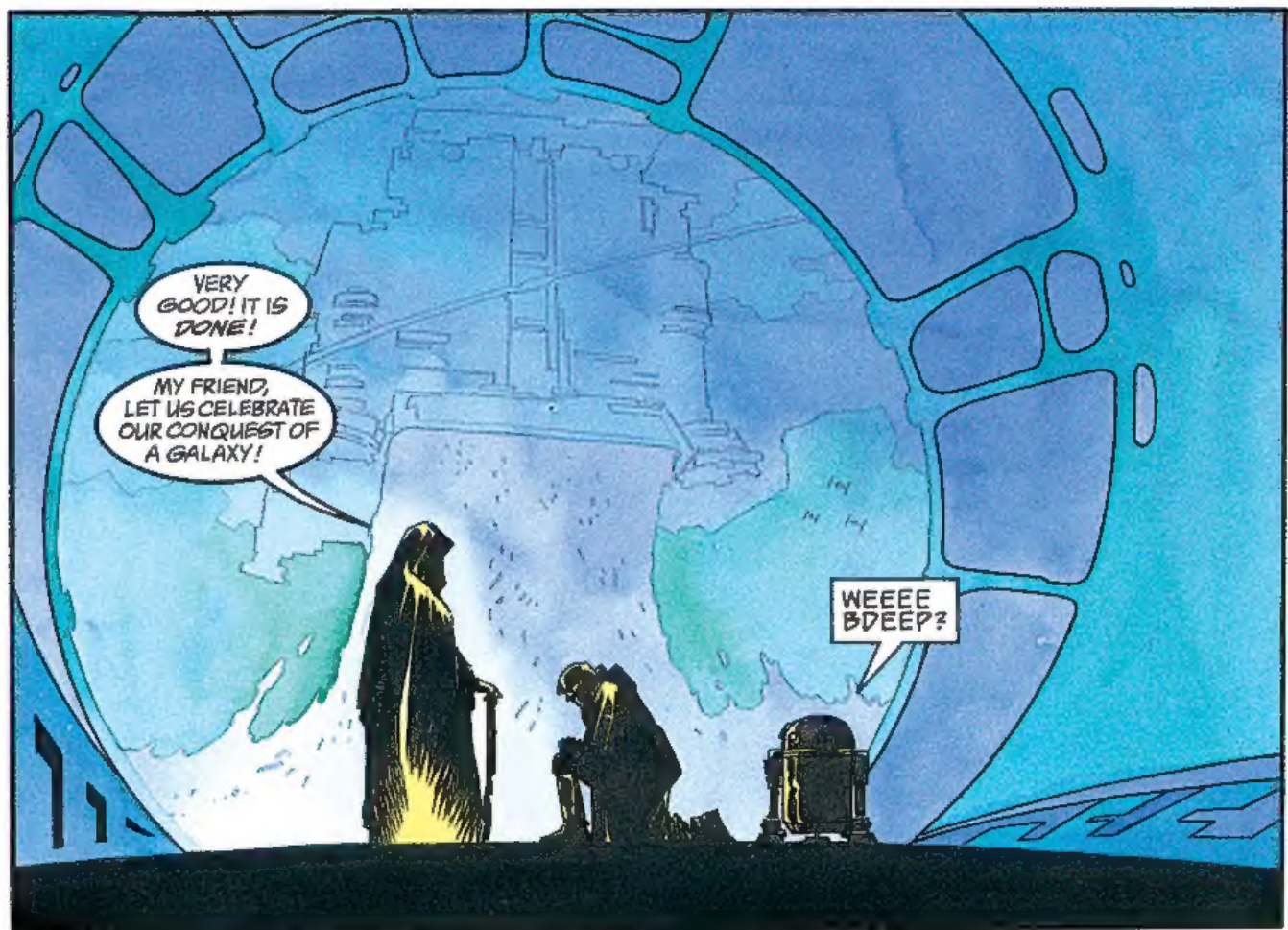
MY FATHER'S
DESTINY IS MY
OWN.

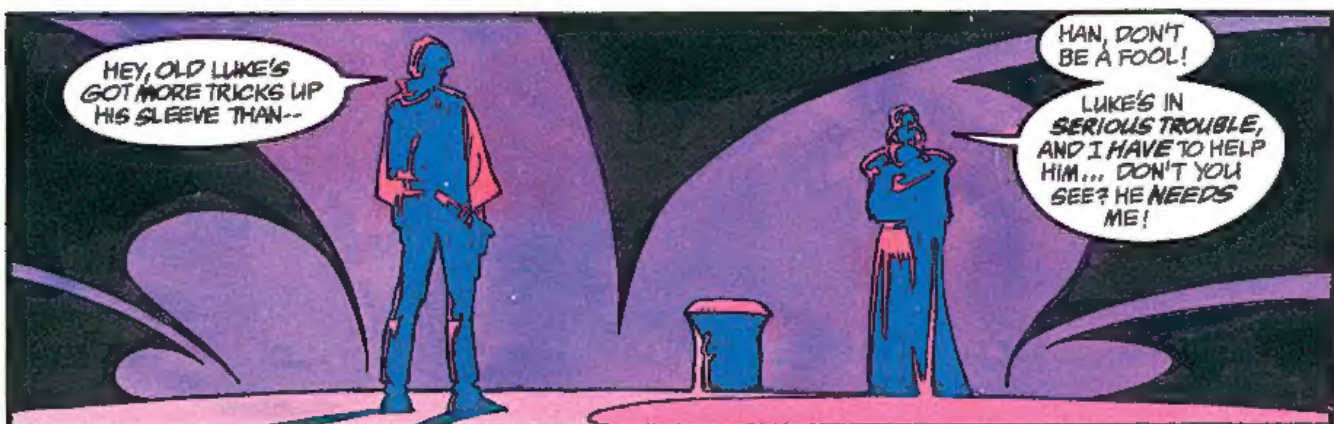
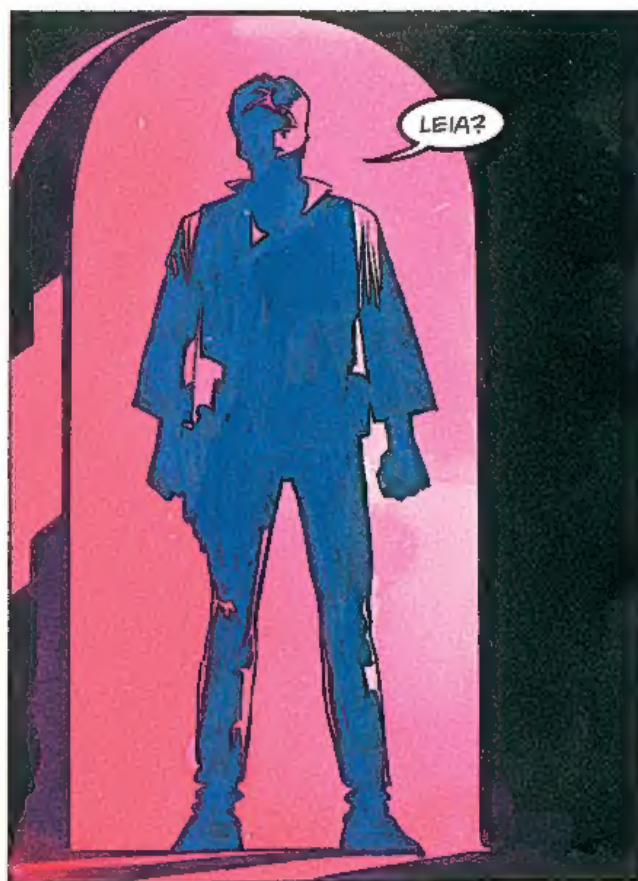


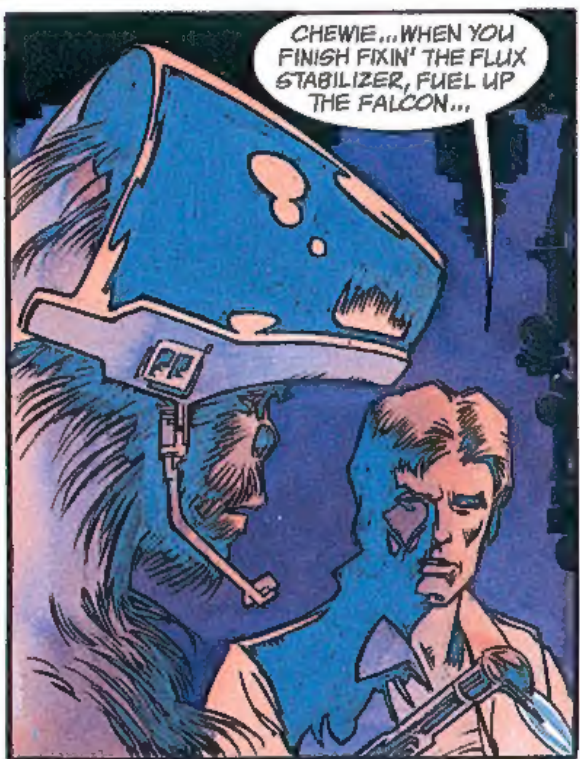
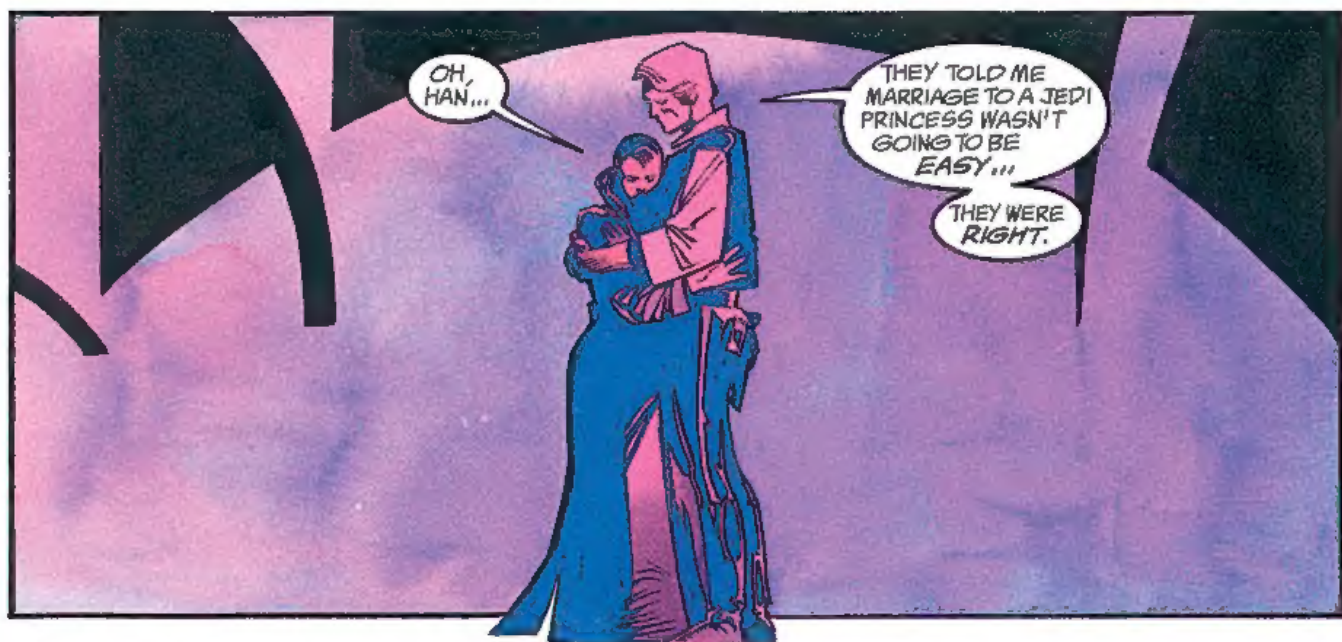
VERY
GOOD! IT IS
DONE!

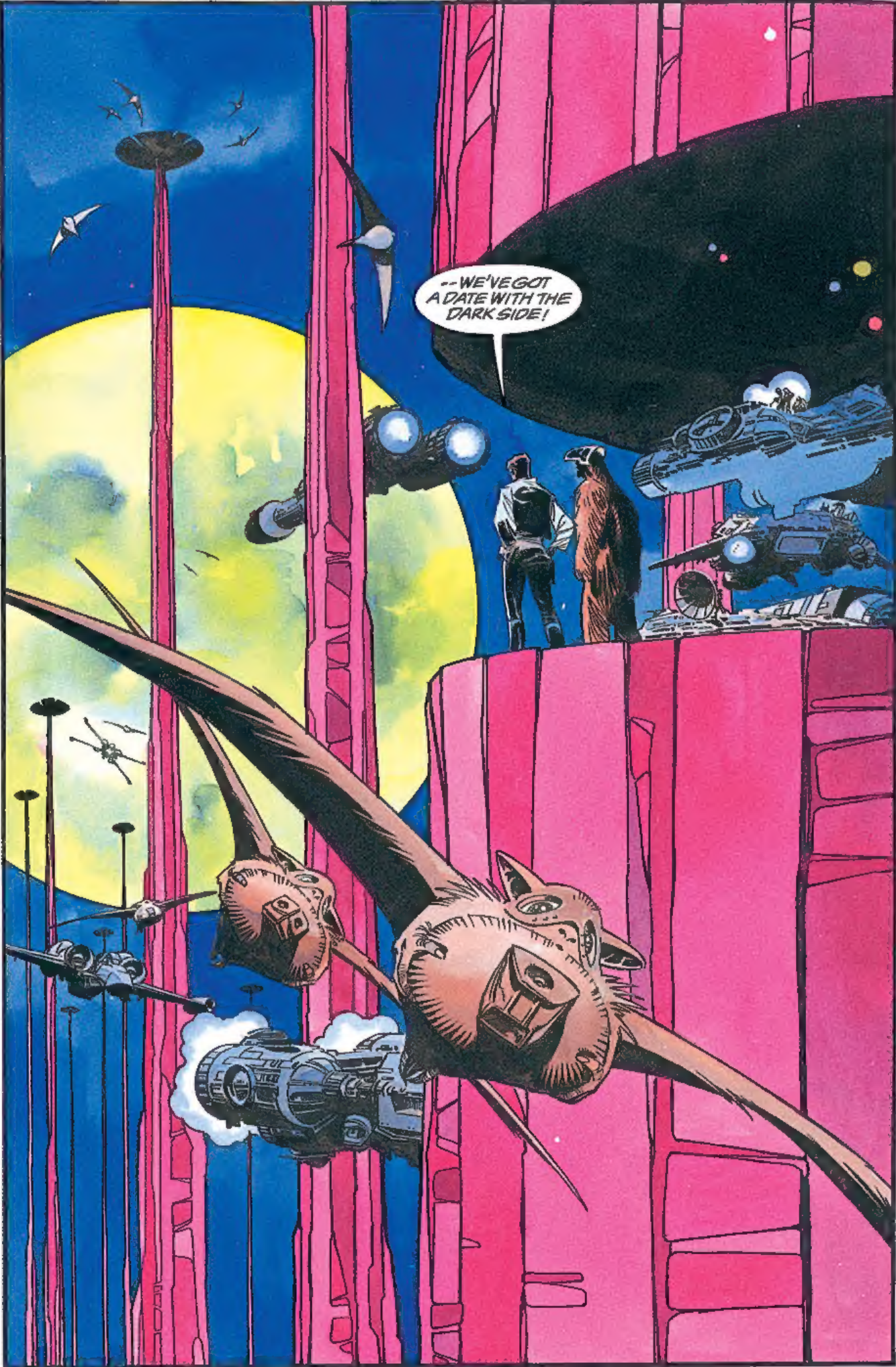
MY FRIEND,
LET US CELEBRATE
OUR CONQUEST OF
A GALAXY!

WEEEE
BDEEP?









-- WE'VE GOT
A DATE WITH THE
DARK SIDE!